

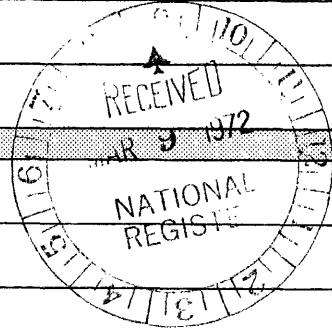
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

PH0020842

STATE: <u>Connecticut</u>	
COUNTY: <u>Fairfield</u>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV 7 1972	

1. NAME			
COMMON: <u>Barnum Museum</u>			
AND/OR HISTORIC: <u>Barnum Institute of Science and History</u>			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: <u>805 Main Street</u>			
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Bridgeport</u>			
STATE <u>Connecticut</u>	CODE <u>09</u>	COUNTY: <u>Fairfield</u>	CODE <u>001</u>



3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

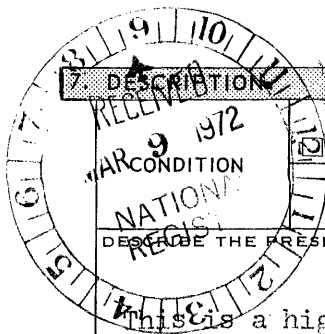
4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: <u>City of Bridgeport</u>			
STREET AND NUMBER: 			
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Bridgeport</u>	STATE: <u>Connecticut</u>	CODE <u>09</u>	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: <u>City Hall</u>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <u>45 Lyon Terrace</u>			
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Bridgeport</u>	STATE: <u>Connecticut</u>	CODE <u>09</u>	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: <u>Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey</u>			
DATE OF SURVEY: <u>1966</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: <u>Connecticut Historical Commission</u>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <u>51 Pratt Street</u>			
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Hartford</u>	STATE: <u>Connecticut</u>	CODE <u>09</u>	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: <u>Connecticut</u>	COUNTY: <u>Fairfield</u>
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <u>NOV 7 1972</u>	DATE



7. DESCRIPTION	
(Check One)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

This is a highly individual structure that would be difficult to match anywhere. The first floor facade is of rough sandstone with squared window openings and arched entryways with squat columns. At the second floor level is a set of three arched windows, while the rest are squared with three columns separating each large window. Above this is a frieze of terra cotta in high relief foliage design, and above this a parapet with the inscription "Barnum Institute of Science and History" in low relief. At the front corner is a large circular tower, again with arched windows and decoration. The frieze of the tower has niches holding busts of notable personages, including P.T. Barnum himself, with panels between in very high relief showing figures engaged in various pursuits--farming, shipping, transportation, military.

At one end of the building is a square tower with a steep pointed roof in Romanesque style, with near-gargoyle faces above the small topmost windows. Beneath these, at the front, is a suggestion of a tracery window. The section at the second-story level has a very plain facade; there are recessed square windows with irregular framing in stone, and a large window, also recessed, beneath with a stone lintel and a single column in the center. The ground floor is similar to the rest of the facade at this level. The very heavy segmental arch has squat columns and the stone work is smooth here.

At the other end of the building is another tower, this one extending only to a gable roof. Here too are arched windows with center columns and smaller, square windows above. Flanking the round center tower on each side are identical sections with a row of arches at the top and a long recessed window with two squat columns. The facade here is of designs in moulded terra cotta.

The roofs of all the sections are moulded tile in the Spanish mode. In the round center tower are round windows protruding from the roof like the eyes of a bug. A very small finial tops its center.

The interior of the Museum is somewhat less spectacular. The large arched windows with their stained glass ornament provide ample light for the exhibits. These exhibits are as unique as Barnum himself. The first floor features the P.T. Barnum room which contains memorabilia and photographs of his colorful life. His American Museum, his birthplace in Bethel, his famous home, Iranistan, and his political and civic career are all portrayed in photographs and paintings and sculpture. The Barnum Circus room is also on the ground floor. Its main attraction is the stuffed hide of "Baby Bridgeport", the second elephant born in captivity in this country. Also on display here are some personal effects of Tom Thumb, color transparencies of circus performers, and a miniature replica of a complete circus made by William R. Brinley of Meriden, Connecticut.

The second floor houses a historical museum, organized in periods--Colonial, Revolutionary War, Civil War, War of 1812, and early Bridgeport. Old household utensils, Connecticut Indian arrowheads, and weapons are

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

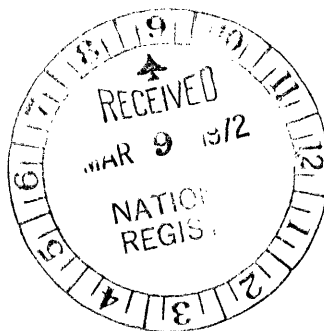
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Fairfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV 7	1972

(Number all entries)

#7 Description

among the more mundane exhibits. Some are quite bizarre—a piece of the cravat worn by President Lincoln the night he was shot, and pieces of the wallpaper and lace curtains from his theater box are carefully protected in a glass case. A 2500-year old mummy is one of the main attractions for young visitors. The museum exhibits are interesting for their diversity but also for much more. They offer a marvelous view into the life of one of the most interesting men of the era—P.T. Barnum.



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

c. 1891-2

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☒ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry☐ losophy☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature☐ itarian☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Barnum Museum derives its primary significance from Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891), its benefactor. Born in Bethel, Connecticut, 30 miles northeast of Bridgeport, he was successively a store clerk, newspaper editor, village storekeeper, and exhibitor of Joice Heth, the alleged nurse of George Washington; it was this act which began his career as a showman.¹ Around 1840, P.T. Barnum opened the American Museum of Curios in New York City. He brought Jenny Lind for a concert tour of the United States in 1850-52. By 1871 he had a troop large enough for him to establish "The Greatest Show on Earth", which had its winter quarters in Bridgeport, his adopted home. Included in the show were the famous midget, Tom Thumb, actually Charles S. Stratton (1832-1883), a Bridgeport native who was only about twenty-five inches tall, and Jumbo, a huge African elephant bought from the Royal Zoological Society in London. In 1881 Barnum merged with the Bailey Circus, whose owner was James Anthony Bailey (1849-1906) from Detroit. They created the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus, which, after Bailey's death, was taken over by Ringling Brothers in 1907.

Barnum was a man with a social and civic conscience. He was once mayor of Bridgeport. Later, he gave to the city a large tract of land for Seaside Park, now covering an area of 180 acres, with a water-side drive of three and a half miles. He laid out numerous street plans and built blocks of houses to sell on the installment plan to mechanics. He built four beautiful homes in Bridgeport; Iranistan, his first home, is pictured in many histories of the City and was designed to resemble a Persian palace. It burned many years ago. Perhaps the most enduring contribution was the Barnum Institute of Science and History. Just before his death in April, 1891, he bequeathed \$100,000 to the Bridgeport Scientific Society and the Fairfield Historical Society for a building. His widow added \$50,000. The building was formally opened in February, 1893, with the first floor housing the museum and collections of the scientific society, the second floor, the collections of the historical society and the Bridgeport Medical Society, and the third floor an auditorium for the use of the three organizations. However, problems arose for there were no funds for maintenance. By October, 1934, the City had taken over the building for municipal offices and the museum was relegated to the third floor. Some space was rented; the Hydraulic Company was there for some time.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bridgeport Sunday Post, February 18, 1968.

"Connecticut Circle", November-December, 1969.

Crofut, F.S.M. Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937.

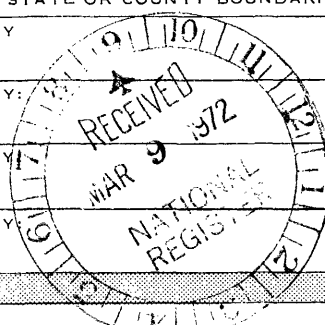
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	41°	10'	32"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"	73°	11'	18"
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"			
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Susan Babbitt, Administrative Trainee

ORGANIZATION: Connecticut Historical Commission DATE: February 1, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: 54 Pratt Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name [Signature]

Title State Liaison Officer

Date February 17, 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 11/7/72

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date 11.1.72

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

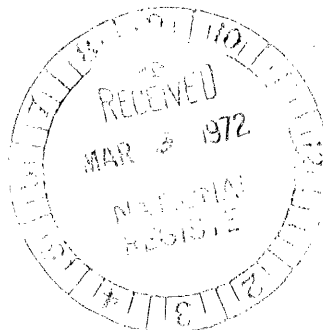
STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Fairfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV	1972

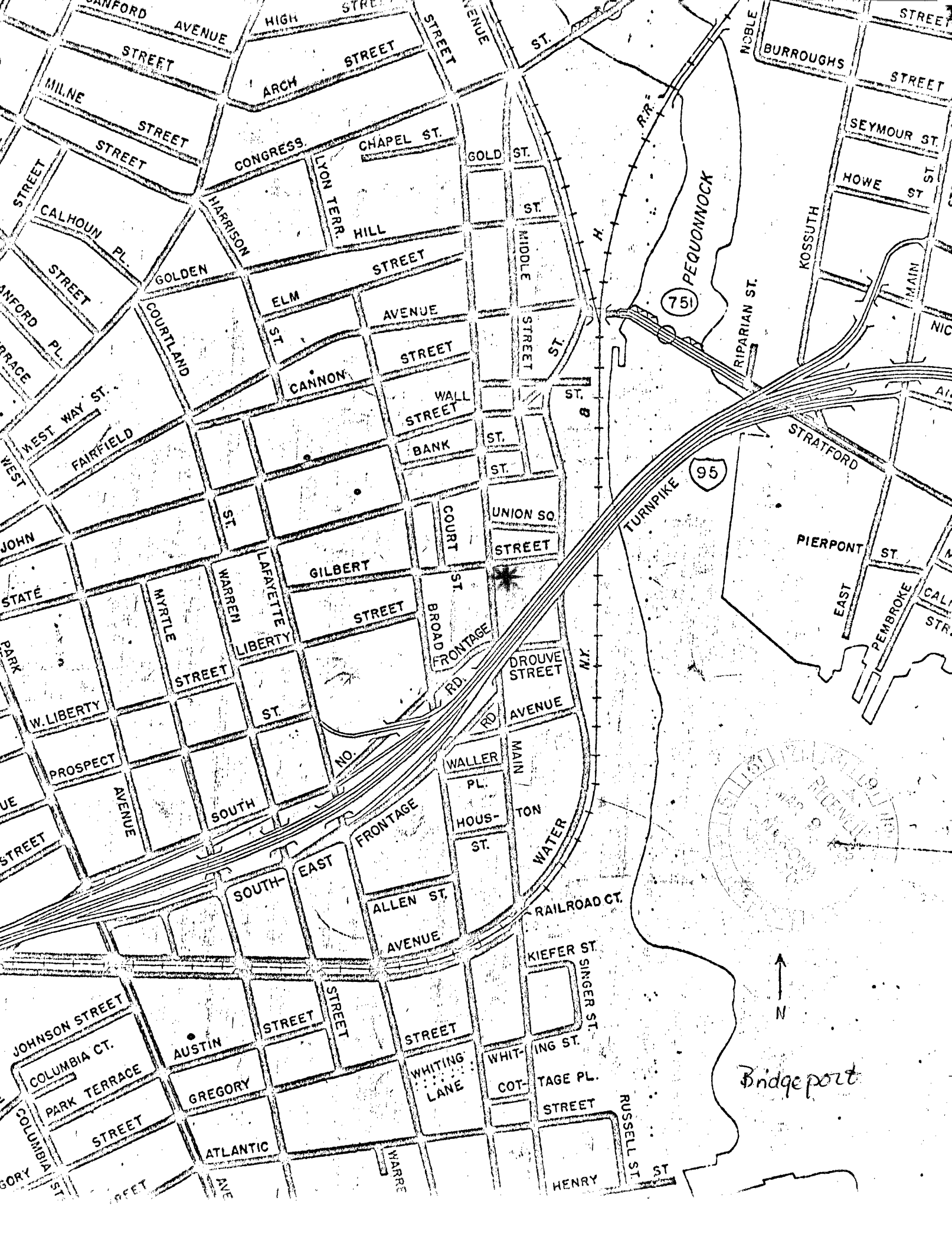
(Number all entries)

#8 Significance

The magnificent building was cleaned and refurbished as a WPA project and again much later by student volunteers from the University of Bridgeport. Each time, hopes were raised for a "comeback" for the museum, and each time nothing came of it. When, in 1966, new City Hall made available ample office space for the museum's inhabitants, the rehabilitation of the building was again undertaken. A complete exterior steam-cleaning and sand-blasting was done along with extensive interior renovation, such as removing the partitions used by the city offices. The Institute was officially reopened as the Barnum Museum on February 19, 1967, just 75 74 years after its first opening on February 18, 1893. The building is now under management by the city. It is alleged that the Museum has recently been endangered. In the commercial district of Bridgeport, less than a block from the Connecticut Turnpike, its site is highly valued for a modern business establishment. The present building, however, is a great asset, if something of an anachronism, in "brand new Bridgeport", currently consisting primarily of razed tenement houses, hence vacant lots, and handicapped by a lack of both funds and the ability to plan for rebuilding.

¹Crofut, p. 87.





BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT
JAN 2 1933
RECEIVED
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT



Bridgeport

